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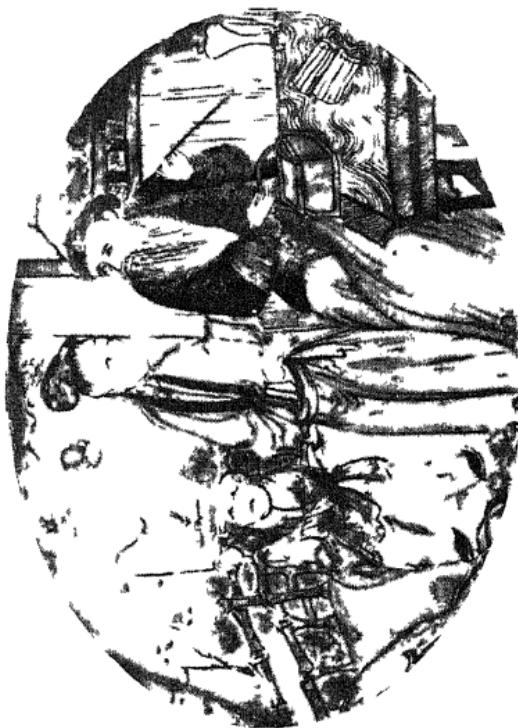




HYPATIA

[Front

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(see p. 78)



# HYPATIA

OR

WOMAN AND KNOWLEDGE

BY

DORA RUSSELL

(MRS. BERTRAND RUSSELL)

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To  
MY DAUGHTER  
KATE RUSSELL



## PREFACE

HYPATIA was a University lecturer denounced by Church dignitaries and torn to pieces by Christians. Such will probably be the fate of this book : therefore it bears her name. What I have written here I believe, and shall not retract or change for similar episcopal denunciations.

DORA RUSSELL.

*January, 1925.*



# HYPATIA

## I

### JASON AND MEDEA

*Is there a Sex War?*

A FEATURE of modern life is that matrimonial quarrels, like modern war, are carried on on a large scale, involving not individuals, nor even small groups of individuals, but both sexes and whole classes of society. In the past, Jason and Medea, neither of them quite an exemplary character, measured their strength against one another as individuals; and, though each voiced the wrongs and the naked brutality of their sex, it did not occur to either to seek in politics or in social reform a solution or a compromise. Jason, indeed, as the

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reactionary face to face with a turbulent and insurgent female, called to his aid the powers of kingship and the State—to suppress and exile, but not to remedy. Medea, driven mad—like so many able and remarkable women—by the contempt and ingratitude of men as individuals or in the mass, and aware that the law was a mockery where she was concerned, expressed herself in savage protest after the manner of a militant suffragette. While I can open my newspaper to-day and read of mothers desperate with hunger, misery, or rage drowning themselves and their children, I cannot bring myself to look upon Medea as some elemental being from a dark and outrageous past. As for Jason, he never did appear to anybody as other than an ordinary male.

During the last twenty or twenty-five years, when women were struggling for their right as citizens to a vote and to a decent education, began what has been called the sex war. No woman would deny that we began it, in the sense that we were rebels against a system of masculine repression which had lasted almost unbroken since the beginning of history. [ 2 ]

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In a similar sense, the proletarian to-day begins the class war. Those who remember the heroic battles of suffrage days know that the sequence of events was as follows : We made our just demands and were met with ridicule. We followed with abuse—all the pent-up anger, misery, and despair of centuries of thwarted instinct and intelligence. Man retaliated with rotten eggs. We replied with smashed windows ; he with prison and torture. People forget so readily, that it is well to remember that this was in the immediate past ; it is not a nightmare picture of one of those future sex wars with which our modern Jasons delight to terrify the timorous of both sexes.

Is there a sex war ? There has been. It was a disgraceful exhibition, and would not have come to a truce so soon, but that it was eclipsed by the still more disgraceful exhibition of the European War. In 1918 they bestowed the vote, just as they dropped about a few Dames and M.B.E.'s, as a reward for our services in helping the destruction of our offspring. Had we done it after the fashion of Medea, the logical male would have been angry.

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They gave the vote to the older women, who were deemed less rebellious. Such is the discipline of patriotism and marriage, as it is understood by most women, that the mother will sacrifice her son with a more resigned devotion than the younger woman brings to the loss of her lover. There may be more in this than discipline. If honesty of thought, speech, and action were made possible for women, it might transpire that on the average a woman's love for her mate is more compelling than love for her offspring. Maternal instinct—genuine, not simulated—is rarer, but, when found, more enduring.

There was a promise, as yet unredeemed by any political party—for the politician has yet to be found who will realize that the sex problem is as fundamental in politics as the class war, and more fundamental than foreign trade and imperial expansion—to extend this franchise on equal terms with men. "Good fellowship" between the sexes as between classes was the key-note of the war. It was held that women had proved their mettle and that mutual aid was to be the basis of all future activities, public and private. The sex question was deemed

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settled, and everyone was led to suppose that all inequalities would be gradually eliminated. On this partial victory and this promise feminists called a truce, and abandoned the tactics of militarism.

But you never know where you have Jason. He was a soldier, mark you, and a gentleman. Forbidden open warfare, he takes to sniping. He snipes the married women out of those posts for which they are peculiarly fitted—as teachers or maternity doctors—although it is against the law to bar women from any public activity on the ground of marriage. He cheats unemployed women out of their unemployment insurance more craftily and brutally than he cheats his fellow-men. Instead of realizing that the competition of women in industry and the professions is a competition of population pressure rather than of sex, he seeks by every means in his power to drive woman back to matrimonial dependence and an existence on less than half a miserably inadequate income ; and then he mocks at her when she claims the right to stem the inevitable torrent of children whose advent will but aggravate man's difficulties as well as her own. But

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worse than all the sniping is the smoke-screen of propaganda. While feminists have, in a large measure, stayed their hand, anybody who has anything abusive to say of women, whether ancient or modern, can command a vast public in the popular press and a ready agreement from the average publisher.

It is a very insidious propaganda. Thus the fashion-papers tell us that grandmamma's ways are coming back into their own ; elsewhere we are flattered for the frank honesty of the modern girl and then warned not to ask for equal pay or opportunity.<sup>1</sup> Again, we hear that woman, like the Labour Party when in office, has done nothing with the opportunities given her by the vote ; or that the country rejected the women candidates wholesale. This, regardless of the fact that the steady increase of the Labour poll has been due in great part to the votes and more to the organization and propaganda of large numbers of intelligent working women who know not only what they want, but how to get it. They are backed now by

<sup>1</sup> Lovat Fraser in a cunning article in *The Sunday Pictorial*, January 4th, 1925.

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many of the middle-class women who were young enough to be revolted by war politics in 1914, and are old enough to claim their citizenship in 1924. Hundreds of thousands of others, now between twenty and thirty, mothers, professional and working women, will make themselves heard before long. To them, the principle of feminine equality is as natural as drawing breath—they are neither oppressed by tradition nor worn by rebellion. I venture to think that, had the Labour Party machine been less dominated by the masculine perspective, to which the equal franchise Bill was a matter of secondary importance, they would not have lost so heavily in the 1924 election. Votes for women at 21 would have greatly increased the poll of many Labour candidates. I have seen young mothers almost sobbing outside the polling-station on polling-day because they had no vote to cast for the future of themselves and their children. As for the defeat of women candidates, everybody, including the leader-writers who spread the adverse propaganda, knew perfectly well that the majority of them stood in constituencies where even a man of their party would

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not have had the ghost of a chance. Here again Jason at headquarters displayed his well-known chivalry.

It is no part of my thesis to maintain that women display their feminism in proportion as they vote for any particular political party—Labour, for example. But I do suggest that it is the progressive working woman rather than the woman of the middle class who will in the future make the most important contribution to the thought of feminism and to a solution of our practical difficulties. One of the most inveterate anti-feminists, the author of *Lysistrata*, as an avowed anti-democrat, has based his thesis and his strictures on observations that do not go beyond the bounds of upper- and middle-class people, barely even beyond the bounds of the night club or the suburban dance-hall. In his eyes we are to blame for everything. Our worst crime is to “blaspheme life and man”; our next, not to have prevented food being put into tins; our next, to have adhered faithfully to that ascetic view of life and sex so firmly instilled into us by medieval monks and bullying Puritan fathers and brothers. We are to blame for the

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industrial revolution in that we let weaving, spinning, milling, and baking go out of our hands. We are to blame for the iniquities of doctors in that we did not maintain our position as the dispensers of healing potions and simples. We are to blame in that we have not learned to bring forth our children without pain, those children whose brows bear the marks of obstetric instruments that were used to spare their mothers, and whose lips have not been laid to those inhuman mothers' breasts. (There are no scars of war, O Jason !) Where is salvation for us, and how shall we rid us of the burden of our iniquity ? We who have waxed so arrogant that we have even aspired to let science build our children outside their mothers' bodies must humble ourselves once more and take upon us the whole duty of woman. We must use our votes to restore aristocracy<sup>1</sup> and take the food out of tins ; spin and weave, no doubt, the while we nurse and bear our yearly child, delivering

<sup>1</sup> An ingenious method of accomplishing this suggests itself. Since women do not sit in the House of Lords, suppose that all Peers' wives, following the example of the Duchess of Atholl,

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it over to infanticide when necessary, since birth-control is artificial and displeasing to the male. In our leisure moments—of which, doubtless, we shall find many under this humane *régime*—we are to discover by what means of diet, or exercise it may be, we can fulfil our maternal functions with pleasure instead of suffering.

A joke, you say? No, no, my poor Medea, it is a man called Rousseau, risen from the dead. Not long ago he preached this sort of thing to women who pinched their waists and wore a dozen petticoats. They were not educated enough to follow Voltaire, so they listened to what Rousseau called the Voice of Nature. Soon thereafter, they found they were being abused for being less civilized, more ape-like than the male, irrational and unsuited to take a part in public life. So they tried again, poor things, and then there was an awful thing called the Industrial Revolution, and the food got into tins. They may be pardoned, as may all of

stand for Parliament where their husbands have estates. This would obviate the necessity, now felt by Conservatives, of restoring the veto of the House of Lords.

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us, if at this point they became a little bewildered. Some people blamed science, some civilization, some the meat-trusts and the millers, but the true culprit, as ever, was Woman. A thousand voices cried her down—she hadn't enough children; she had too many; she was an ape; she was a dressed-up doll; she was a Puritan; she was an immoral minx; she was uneducated; they had taught her too much. Her pinched waist was formerly abused—now it was her slim and boyish body. Eminent surgeons<sup>1</sup> committed themselves to the view that the boyish figure with its pliable rubber bust-bodices and corselets would be the ruin of the race, that race which had been superbly undegenerate through four centuries of armour-plate corset and eighteen-inch waists, that race which, then or now, can hardly compete in toughness with the Chinese, among whom the boyish figure has been for centuries the ideal, and whose women cannot conceivably be accused of shirking any of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Arbuthnot Lane, for whom I have hitherto entertained an entirely unqualified admiration, in a recent article. *Vide The Weekly Dispatch*, December 28th, 1924.

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the responsibilities of maternity. Others told us that the woman-doctor has no nerve to tend confinements, and conveniently forgot that, since the world began, and until quite modern times, it is women who have ministered to one another in that agony which now as in the past is the lot of every mother. Is there truth in the words of Jason? Is there truth or justice in the passion of Medea? Let us not ask the protagonists, but let us summon the inquiring intelligence of Hypatia to find us a way out of the intolerable tangle in which their quarrelling has landed us.

## II

### ARTEMIS

#### *The Early Struggles of Feminism*

WHEN the feminist struggle began during the last century, ignorance and beauty were the two qualities most admired in women. It is necessary to remind our masculine critics what was the soil from which the feminist movement sprang and what the current morality which influenced its direction. It was customary in those days to make fun of old or ugly women and to scorn those who showed any signs of intelligence. A man chose a young, beautiful, and blushing creature for his bride, and transformed her by one year of marriage and one childbirth into a gentle and submissive matron. Ugly or intelligent women, for the most part, paid a heavy price. Not only were they rejected in youth, and starved of all their

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natural joys, but as "old maids" they were the object of general scorn and derision. Small wonder that women adopted artificial aids to beauty and artificial hindrances to their native intelligence. Strongest of all the taboos laid by masculine custom and religion on feminine minds was that regarding sex-knowledge. Their purity was to be preserved only by ignorance, and even as matrons and mothers it was scarcely decent for them to refer to any of the physical changes of their bodies. It is impossible to over-estimate the strength of this tradition, or the harm which has been worked by it to the cause of women.

The feminists were, and are still, howled down by men on the pretence that they invented chastity and scorn of bodily values. History disproves such a ridiculous assertion. The early feminists were what history and tradition made them, and could not at the time of their rebellion have been otherwise. The origin of the stupid ideal of womanhood against which men as well as women to-day are still fighting was the asceticism of the Christian religion ; and, unless St. Paul was a woman in disguise, I fail to

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see how woman is to be blamed for a conception of her place and duty from which she has suffered more than anybody else. Before the conversion of the West to Christianity, barbarian women of the North enjoyed a certain rough equality with their husbands. They stride through the sagas, these fierce women, brides of heroes, glad to reward the warrior with their favours, quick to avenge an insult or a wrong. They had no need to stoop to cajolery. Savage and untamed, they were the fit and equal mates of savage men.

Then came the monks, and the white wimples and courtly dresses and chivalry, chants and cathedrals, and meek and reverent casting up and casting down of eyes. The savage breast that had swelled and throbbed untrammelled in love or anger learnt to flutter and to sigh. Quenched were the fires of Brunhilde, her sunlit rock deserted. Agnes and Mary, tamed and pious, sat cooing in the shade. But for meekness and maternity, the early days of asceticism might have seen a crusade to destroy that temptress—woman. Barely allowed a soul, she slipped through a life of oblivion, praying

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that it might be a pretty crown with which Heaven would reward her patience and submission at the last. Then came the Puritans and denied her even that, substituting ugliness in this life as well as the negation of body, and a heaven of people in starched nightshirts, rendered oblivious to the horrid spectacle of their figures by the still more horrid chanting of their nasal psalms.

A breath of rationalism—brief, soon choked, a breath of “nature”—and so to crinolines, pantalettes, and a life still lived in terror of hell-fire, terror of parents, dread of husband, horror of the least breath of adverse public opinion. Any-one who reads the *Fairchild Family* must marvel that from such nerve-destroying parental tyranny and the intolerable weight of prejudice and religious superstition the nineteenth-century woman ever found the courage to rebel.

Was it astonishing that the revolt had in it something frenzied and ascetic—that it seemed to express the anger of the spinster thwarted and despised in the current scheme of values? I do not think the pioneers were so much Puritan as votaries, hanging the tablet of each

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achievement in the temple of Athene or of Artemis, pressing on, breathless, swift of foot, sure of aim, in dread of the fate of Atalanta whom the Golden Apples lured to destruction and the marital embrace. "Chaste as the icicle, that hangs on Dian's temple." They had need to be, perhaps, who, in an atmosphere of swoons and ringlets, won for us schools and colleges, free limbs, health and the open air; unlocked for us the classics, science, medicine, the history of our world; drew us from our paltry, ladylike accomplishments; wrote upon our school-books: "Knowledge is now no more a fountain sealed," and flung wide the gate into the world.

They, these pioneers, childless, unwed, created and bore thousands of women, made them anew, body and soul, for lives of mental and physical activity unknown in the past to any but the very exceptional few. Just like the new learning of the Renaissance to men's minds in Europe was the opening of high school and university to the feminine mind of to-day. Thousands of women of the last generation and this, who would otherwise have passed their existence in genteel poverty and

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vacancy of mind, have found their happiness in teaching, in medicine, or in some other profession. Thousands of mothers have watched with delight the unfolding of their children's minds, and enjoyed co-operating over "lessons" and arguing politics with the adolescent.

We, who in a sense are the children of the feminist pioneers, whose thoughts embrace the universe, whose lives are one long round of mental and physical delight, at times intense to ecstasy—we at least will pay our tribute to those who lit the sacred fires, before we take up pen and paper to criticize.

When one reads the lamentations of would-be intelligent men about the iniquities of modern young people, chiefly those of the female sex, one cannot but laugh at their method of approach. It would seem according to them that our modern women just happen like that: no one had a part in forming their bodies or in training their minds. In so far as these people consider education or early training at all, it is to blaspheme at the sex-hating feminists who have trained modern women to dispense with their birth-right—the love of man. How this

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squares with the wail of the Bishops against the sexual immorality of the younger generation we will leave Jason or the eloquent author of *Lysistrata* to decide. Our business is not to condemn woman, past or present, but to chronicle faithfully the forces that have made her, and the aspirations which will mould her future. For she, and she alone, shall be the arbiter of her fate, and neither man nor creed stand between her and the realization of her ideals. Men have blasphemed woman and life too long, and it will not be until the issues are clearer, the battle more advanced, that the basis for co-operation between man and woman can be finally established. There is too much evidence at present that man, professing friendship and concern, is still ready to snatch from us what little we have won.

To those elderly gentlemen, then, who watch with horror the upper- and middle-class woman perpetrating similar follies to those of upper- and middle-class men, the first question we would put is: "What education did they give their daughters, and what was taught to their mothers before them? What were

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the current ideas about feminine destiny which encircled them in their impressionable years ? ” Many would answer, still far too many, that their daughters were given the education of a gentlewoman and fitted to become the wives of gentlemen. This we know of old. The lady eats, drinks, digests, wears clothes, tinkles the piano, dances, sings, handles a golf-club, submits to sex, bears a child without the smallest notion of anatomy, turns from the whole thing disgusted, and probably bears no more. Whose fault ? Not hers. They do not teach mothercraft or physiology in finishing schools for gentlemen’s daughters, and it is no part of the duty of gentlemen’s wives to reproduce their kind. Perhaps there is comfort in that.

A great many parents, however, would tell us that they gave their daughters a good and liberal education in such schools as were available, good ordinary boarding and day-schools which have sprung up during the last fifty years in response to the feminist propaganda. Then we have the working woman, who has shared with her brothers in what education is permitted to trickle through the elementary

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schools. It must not be forgotten that this ends at fourteen.

Is there something wrong with this education of women, and if so, what? I think we must judge that there is. The reason lies in the sense of inferiority bred in women by so much oppression, and the natural result that their chief aim as they struggled upwards was to prove that in all respects they were just as good as men. The second aim was to prove that they could jolly well do without them. In exactly the same way the worker, rising in the social scale, seeks to prove himself a *bourgeois*. Both efforts are mistaken. Each class and sex has that to give to the common stock of achievement, knowledge, thought, which it alone can give, and robs itself and the community by inferior imitation. The feminist movement, like one dissentient voice in an excited public meeting, was querulous, hysterical, uncertain of itself. It dared not cry out that women had bodies. Its one hope of success was to prove that women had minds. And it was right in this, that the primary fact about men and women is not that they are two sexes apart, but that they are human beings and

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as such should share all knowledge in the world and make it the basis of their partnership and the rearing of their children.

Many an ardent feminist spinster in a girls' secondary school has sighed over the state of public opinion which forced her to drive her girls' minds along channels for which they were not always suited, that they might do well at college and show that women could surpass the men. Many another, well drilled by a mother or tradition in ideals of feminine virtue, gloried in the sexless learned women she was creating and in the thought that one day they would force those savage, lustful men to conform to the ideals which they set up for women. Why blame her? Lay the blame where it is due. It will be but a just retribution for that lustful male and his ideal of feminine virtue if one day, in a world full of prohibitions, he finds himself forced to kneel before the Mumbo-Jumbo<sup>1</sup> he himself built up to terrify his wives and daughters to submission.

<sup>1</sup> Mumbo-Jumbo was an idol set up by the men in Nigeria to terrify erring women. The men, but not the women, knew him to be a fake. See *Mungo Park's Travels*.

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Feminist ideals of education, then, had the defect that they did in a certain measure deny sex, or ignore it. The feminists had a pathetic hope that by so doing they would convince the dominant male that a woman might be learned and yet remain a lady. But I wish to emphasize the fact that this feature has belonged to all education of women, especially of ladies, from time immemorial, and it is, therefore, unbecoming in a male, whether young or old, to use this as a cause for reproach to our sex. We went as far as we dared with an eye to male hostility. Young feminists to-day would be the first to admit that it would probably have paid us to go further. There never has been a period when education has trained women for the possibility of motherhood, and it is time that such training was begun. There never was a period when the education of women was completely honest, and it is time that that training was begun. What knowledge is of more vital importance to women than anatomy and physiology? They were allowed it if they were to be doctors, and then only with caution. Turning casually the pages of a book on

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anatomy in a girls' secondary school library, I found the diagrams connected with sex and maternity carefully stuck fast. What is more calculated to inspire prying and prurience? We have no right to blame young women for shirking marriage, sex, or motherhood, or for moulding their figures on boyish lines, when we carefully treat them as boys and withhold from them as long as we can all knowledge of the difference of their physique and possibly of their destiny. I have no wish to go back on the great achievements of feminism, or to drive women from the professions in which they have a just right to be employed. I want to break down the last barriers. Artemis is slim and bold; Athene is stately. We have done well to worship at their shrines.

But the call of Demeter the Fruitful is insistent. If we would add to the achievements of those who came before us, let us freely admit that we have but been playing mock modesty, and that to us the body is no mere box to hold the mind, but a temple of delight and ecstasy: a temple to hold the future if we will. To me the important task of modern

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feminism is to accept and proclaim sex ; to bury for ever the lie that has too long corrupted our society—the lie that the body is a hindrance to the mind, and sex a necessary evil to be endured for the perpetuation of our race. To understand sex—to bring to it dignity and beauty and knowledge born of science, in place of brute instinct and squalor—that is the bridge that will span the breach between Jason and Medea.

### III

#### ASPASIA

##### *The Younger Feminists*

WHILE we have admitted that the first aim of the feminist movement was to open to women the stores of learning, to develop their minds and to teach them to think, and that no attempt was made to handle the problem of sex, it is not quite fair to say that even early feminism has consistently denied or despised the body. The schools and colleges made it their business to give to women opportunities for physical development, for open-air exercise, swimming, tennis, hockey, lacrosse. The Victorian young woman learnt gradually to be ashamed of her tiny waist and fat hips. She learnt that a healthy appetite<sup>1</sup> as well became a

<sup>1</sup> There may be a biological cause of the alleged smallness of feminine appetite. Watching a raven and his consort with fresh meat, I

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young woman as a young man, gave up her snacks in private and did justice to good meals taken at proper intervals. Quietly, and without mention of the fatal word "sex," the spinster feminists, by emphasis on health and vigour, built up a generation of young women who were to be frank about other desires besides eating and drinking.

I cannot see what is the matter with our figures. Steel rods and rubber are more modern materials than oak beams and pink plaster. Neither we nor our modern lovers admire the opulent Venuses, indolent and rose-embowered, who adorned the ceilings of old-fashioned ballrooms. They were stupid, self-indulgent creatures, not even good mothers, whatever the sentimental elderly gentlemen in their top-hats and whiskers may have to say. What is a good mother we will discuss in a later chapter, but for the present it is enough

observed that she obtained only a minute portion beneath the contempt of the male. Can it be that, in the savage state, only those females survived who could exist on the little the male allowed them? Is this a case of sex-linked heredity?

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to say that more dangerous childbirths are due to narrow pelvis caused by rickets than to hips contracted by the corsets of vanity. Let the doctors turn socialist and feed the poor, instead of spending their time lamenting the inadequacy for childbirth of a few fashionable women who don't very much matter. Middle- and upper-class girls nowadays—and most working-class girls, too—go corsetless up to maturity. They do gymnastic exercises, and dances that give suppleness to the body. They swim and they play out of doors. Those who are rich enough to be adequately fed are graceful and active as kittens, and as healthy. By the time adolescence brings, as it always does, a few years of intensive sex-vanity, the corset can do very little harm. The muscular little body does not tolerate it stiff, or very tight, and the bones are well grown. The mystery of feminine dress helps the appearance of slimness. There are few clothes, and no lumpy gathers. Beneath that boyish outline are firm little breasts, clean arching hips, abdominal curves and thighs, lovely as anything the Venus of Milo has to show.

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Artemis fashioned this modern woman. That is admitted. Has Artemis her vows?

I'm afraid for once we have to admit that the Bishops are right. In spite of everything the Church can do, in spite of an education committed, so far as the authorities can control it, to sour or religious spinsters, the modern young woman is not very moral. It is a pathetic picture which the author of *Lysistrata* has drawn for us, of sexless beings going to and fro in tube and bus like shuttles in a machine to dull work robbed of all joy, earning their livelihood and turning their backs on man in response to feminist propaganda. Man, the enemy—to be defeated in his own professions, to be repelled in every onslaught upon feminine virtue: I wonder? I would hazard a guess that, relatively to the population, fewer women retain their virginity till death than in the Victorian period or the Middle Ages. In all probability it is sex, not sexlessness, which makes women cling so tenaciously to the right to earn their living. Marriage brings a jealous intolerant husband, children, prying and impertinent neighbours—degraded and

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humiliating slavery for the vast majority of women. Thirty shillings a week and typing or working in a shop, a still tongue, or a toss of the head and the assertion that independence is the best ; and, in the background a lover with whom somehow evenings are spent—a lover who has no claim and cannot tyrannize. A lover, perhaps, who pleads to become a husband, but has no chance unless his income is good or secure. Marriage would change him : Aspasia knows it. Marriage would also rob her of that thirty shillings a week, which alone stands between her and the abyss of primeval submission. Or else Aspasia teaches in a school or college. She is a skilled teacher, devoted to her work and pupils. She may be a Research Fellow in some difficult branch of learning which is to her the very breath of life. She may be a doctor in the public service, tending and advising mothers and children. She is lovely, vital, creative. Man approaches. There are holidays of delight and secret dread of the scandal which will end the work Aspasia loves—or marriage and the certainty of that end at once. “Choose,” say the Bishops and the school-managers (often the same thing) ;

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"choose," say the public authorities who support the Church and rather wish women would get out of this indelicate profession of surgery and medicine; "choose between love and duty to the male and service to the community." This is not feminism—feminists have fought it persistently—it is medieval Christianity. It presents a choice between physical pleasure and service to the mind or soul; it upholds the time-honoured theory that renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil is the path to duty and salvation. I am fully aware of all the arguments about economic pressure, the primary right of married men to work, the awful situation of their dependent children and their wives. None of this is fundamental, and the jealous male knows it. "Divide to conquer" is the principle in dealing with trade unions; it works equally well in the feminist struggle. Persuade the single women that the married woman is an unfair competitor,<sup>1</sup> terrify them so

<sup>1</sup> This scheme no longer works, as is evidenced by the attitude of the National Union of Women Teachers this year (1925). Intelligent women are more appreciated than they were, and teachers know they may all want to marry some day.

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far as you can into believing that to succumb to sex is something unbecoming and disgraceful and punishable with misery everlasting, whether in marriage or outside it, and you can prevent the women combining against you.

But not if Aspasia will speak. If she but would, and put an end to this lie for ever. She could tell us how, especially during the years of war, young women took the last step towards feminine emancipation by admitting to themselves and their lovers the mutual nature of sex-love between man and woman. It sounds a platitude, but is, in fact, a revolution. Strange to say, the nearness of death from enemy bombs or enemy fire did not intensify the thought of holiness and heaven. It made the little footrules to measure morality look absurd; it mocked the emptiness of female virtue. While poverty and parents forbade the certainty of marriage, with nothing but instability and death around them, our modern Aspasias took the love of man and gave the love of woman, and found this union, free and full on either side, the most priceless gift the immortal gods can bestow. There is nothing new in

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this, the moralist will say—it is just wickedness. Yes, there is this that is new: that, though these younger women may be driven from fear of starvation to the outward acceptance of old codes and conventions, inwardly they know they have done no wrong and will not admit a conviction of sin. Sex, even without children and without marriage, is to them a thing of dignity, beauty, and delight. All Puritans—and most males so long as they can remember—have tried to persuade women that their part in sex is pregnancy and childbirth, and not momentary delight. As well tell a man his part is the hunting and skinning of animals for food and clothing. To enjoy and admit we enjoy, without terror or regret, is an achievement in honesty. We will go further and say that polygamy, proffered by the male as a solution to our sexless lives, is no solution at all when we are polyandrous. It is useless to go on pretending, as both sexes do, about this question. The plain truth is that there are as many types of lover among women of all classes as among men, and that nothing but honesty and freedom will make instinctive satisfaction possible

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for all. Grant each man and woman the right to seek his or her own solution without fear of public censure. Moral questions of this kind cannot be decided by some abstract rule. It would not be wrong for a man to have six wives, provided he and they all found mutual happiness, in that arrangement; nor for a woman to have six husbands and a child by each, if she and they found such a life satisfactory. The wrong lies in rules that are barriers between human beings who would otherwise reach a fuller and more intense understanding of one another. And any man or woman of intelligence and vitality can testify that to have known each other as lovers is to have completed mental and spiritual, as well as physical, understanding, and to have permanently enriched each other's lives, capacities, energies, imaginations. There is no need to make these divisions into mind and body. There is no difference. A way of walking, laughter, thoughts spoken or written, gestures of love or anger, colour and light of eyes or hair—these are the human being, man or woman. It is thus that modern individuals think of one another. When we

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think so, it seems absurd to argue whether or no love between man and woman should stop short of a certain kind of physical expression. It is useless to say that a mental exchange is sufficient. On the contrary, lovers know that it is through sexual understanding they best apprehend the quality of each other's minds. It is equally futile to argue that woman is cheated of her full rights if children do not result. That is not true.

It is said that modern human beings, by dint of not valuing the body, are physically degenerate and lose the finest ecstasies of love. Their digestions are poor, we are told, their breath foul, their teeth bad. Was love more delightful, then, in the old days when baths were unknown, when "sweet breath" in a woman was so rare as to be sung by poets, and the reek of stale sweat was barely stifled by a strong perfume? John Donne wrote verses to the flea he saw nestling in his lady's bosom. There is scarcely a fine gentleman to-day who could face the prospect of making love to one of the fine ladies of the past six or seven hundred years in Europe, if she could be presented to him just as she

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was to her contemporary lovers. It is true that neither vermin, filth, nor squalor—being equal for both—can stay the passion of sex whether now or in the past, but I do not believe in the theory that the rougher our physique the more intense our bodily delights. Health, to be sure, is essential; but health is to be secured in the modern world, not by a return to savagery, but by the use of intelligence. I believe the bodies of young people of to-day to whom fair opportunities have been given are more healthy within and without than they were in past times. And I believe that the disappearance of religious and moral dualism between mind and matter—not by an oppressive victory of either, neither by rational and moral control, nor by abandonment to sensual materialism, but by a better understanding of psychology and physiology based on the discoveries of physical science—is bringing to the whole of life, but especially to sex-love, maternity, the rearing and education of children, joy and rapture and promise surpassing anything known to the purely instinctive life of the past. Of course we are bewildered. Civilization

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without decay is at last a possibility. Let us have knowledge and patience : blaspheming and violence will ruin all.

It is for modern women and for men who can understand the problem to make an end to secrecy, shame, and starvation where sex is concerned. There has been a good deal of freedom in action, but less boldness in speech, because of the heavy penalties involved. For some women speech is impossible ; those who are secure must fight their battle. How old and proper people love a vigorous and god-like young male ! How they look askance upon, brow-beat, and bully his equivalent in the opposite sex ! Here is a community for ever starving and choking its finest women, stifling their voices in education and public life ; then turning and rending the submissive residue for being what years of intimidation have made them. Let them marry, you say, and make a success of that and their children. That would be well enough but for the taboos and disabilities with which marriage is surrounded. Feminism led women away from the home that they might return armed and unsubdued to make marriage tolerable.

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Women who have been free remember the horror of the approach to marriage : a barrier for most of us to free public activity ; /a life-long contract only to be broken in disgrace and public disgust ; aunts, uncles, social duties that exasperate and are totally unnecessary; the common view that henceforward husband and wife are one and indivisible, and the wife for ever to be burdened with her husband's duties and affairs ; looks of surprise and reproach if we enjoy other male society ; constraint in the manner of men formerly our friends ; income, if we have any or can still earn, taxed as a part of our husband's; children, which, had we had them illegitimate, would have been our own but now are our husband's ; worst of all, the looks and smiles from silly women broken in to slavery, congratulating us on having done well and made ourselves secure for life.

Let no one think this is petulant abuse. It is the accumulation of these details and the pressure of public opinion which gradually destroy the nerve and independent judgment of married women who, in their free state, have been brilliant and remarkable. It is the fact that, by

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marriage, we conform and place ourselves in a line with millions of others whose view of what we have done is entirely foreign to our own. As a Labour Minister is corrupted by Court dress, so is a free woman by the marriage-contract. Nothing but our desire for children would make us endure it. We, to whom the mutual nature of sex-love is sacred, to whom a partnership involving children is of equal dignity on both sides, to whom the surrender of our whole being in love is a free gift—the highest we can bestow ; who would neither bind ourselves nor others where love is non-existent ; we must submit to a contract based on rights of property and possession, buying and selling of our bodies ; a law whose conception of conjugal wrongs is sin, punishment, and just revenge ; and a Church whose utmost concession is to bid us “serve” instead of “obey” our husbands. Build, O Aspasia, a trade union of lovers to conquer the world, and cry aloud that feminism is nowhere so much needed as in the home.

## IV

### HECUBA

#### *Feminist Mothers*

So far I have refrained from any detailed discussion of modern women and maternity because it is still necessary to make it clear that a full life of activity for women is perfectly possible and permissible without it. I am quite aware that certain religious people assert as a moral principle that the purpose of sex-love is not mutual enjoyment but the perpetuation of the race. I am also aware that militarists enjoin on women the necessity of marriage and large families as a patriotic duty. Further, certain doctors have gone out of their way to try to prove that the use of contraceptives is contrary to health and nature. These same people, we may note, have no aversion from the wearing by women of internal remedial

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rubber supports for months on end nor to patching up with silver, papier mâché, and other foreign materials, the insides and outsides of human beings mutilated in the natural and healthy pursuit called war. I am not concerned with the morals of convention or superstition, but with the morals of experience. It is the experience of modern women that sex is an instinctive need to them as it is to men, and further that the prevention of conception brings to them no loss of poise, health, or happiness. On the contrary, when once they embark on the task of maternity, contraception is a blessed safeguard to health and recovery in the periods of rest between pregnancies. I am not going to deny that the most perfect delight known to human beings is the completely reckless, mutually adoring union of two people of vitality and intelligence who hope to create another human being as a constant reminder of the beauty of that moment. But many considerations, which we shall discuss, forbid a yearly child. I read recently in an article by G. K. Chesterton, that sex without gestation and parturition is like blowing the trumpets and waving the flags without doing any of the

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fighting. From a woman such words, though displaying inexperience, might come with dignity ; from a man they are an unforgivable, intolerable insult. What is man's part in sex but a perpetual waving of flags and blowing of trumpets and avoidance of the fighting ? The vast majority of men are not even tender or kindly to their pregnant or nursing wives, nor will they give help or consideration to the care of their young children.

A revolt against motherhood under present conditions is not surprising, nor is it entirely regrettable. There are quite a number of women whose minds and bodies are not fitted or have not been fitted by their upbringing and education to produce and care for children. This is a source of distress to many people, who, as was suggested earlier, did not think of it at the right moment, when the education of women in public and private schools was being developed. Even now these same people stand in the way of the surest remedy : which is to teach science, physiology, and the beauty of sex and maternity to boys and girls at an early age. The London County Council, many of whom are

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certainly distressed beyond measure at the falling birth-rate and the discontent and irresponsibility of modern young people, have just, in consultation with suitably selected moral headmasters and mistresses, turned down the suggestion of sex-teaching in elementary and secondary schools. We are always told that boys and girls of all classes nowadays acquire this knowledge easily for themselves, but the mere knowledge is not the only thing to the adolescent mind. Things not spoken of by parents or teachers, things dealt with in hushed voices by moral and spiritual leaders, surrounded by cant and humbug and false sentiment, are bound to be thought nasty by mild young people and to provide ribald laughter for the obstreperous.

This is not to say that sex-information should be given in a spirit of evangelical solemnity and exhortation, nor even of soft sentimentality. All that is needed is lessons in physiology, taught as a matter of course, as botany or nature-study are often taught; and then explanations to boys of the working of their bodies, how to keep them in health, how not to dissipate and destroy their

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energies too soon. Further, they should be told that woman is neither a chattel nor a servant, nor even an inferior, but a partner in joy as in the business of life ; that there is no question or difficulty, public or private, which cannot be brought to her for discussion and judgment ; and that she has a right to share in all decisions affecting a joint life, children, money, and the conduct of affairs of State. To girls in the same way could be explained the physical changes of puberty, marriage, and maternity, how the child grows, what food and care the mother, and afterwards the baby, will need. There is nothing in this too difficult or shocking to young or adolescent minds. So many of us can remember the secret conclaves with our friends when we puzzled out and pieced together what scraps of information we could glean, awakening instinct darkly supplementing this knowledge. Some of us can remember, perhaps, having noticed obscene writing on school-walls, instantly reported by shocked prefects, instantly effaced by school-mistresses with an awful and portentous gravity which made us feel we had stumbled on the brink of

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a secret of incredible wickedness and horror. One straightforward lecture of concise information could have dispelled the lurking mystery once and for all and imparted a sense of magic and wonder and ambition. Some of the more fortunate of us, through study in libraries and dreaming over poems, created for ourselves a finer attitude. With no teaching other than that we might find someone who would marry us some day, and that marriage was an excellent destiny even for educated women, and with no belief in any of the moral taboos current around us, some of us can none the less remember the pride of caring for the body, safeguarding health and looks, avoiding excess, severe strain, and overwork, because we cherished our dreams of the children that our bodies were to make—not ordinary children, of course not : Promethean creatures, endowed with every gift that mortal man could steal from the jealous gods, strong, beautiful, intelligent, and bold—kings and conquerors, not of their fellow-creatures but of nature and the mystery of the world. There is not a woman, unless completely warped by early training, in whom such

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dreams and visions will not stir if we try to wake them. If not, then let her pass : we do not need her to perpetuate the race. And do not trick her into motherhood by false sentiment and information, or by withholding from her the means to protect herself if she is not fully resolved upon bearing a child.

We want better reasons for having children than not knowing how to prevent them. Nor should we represent motherhood as something so common and easy that everyone can go through it without harm or suffering and rear her children competently and well. Without arousing dread or horror, we should tell young women frankly the pain and agony of childbirth, and the anxiety and griefs which are the fate of every woman who is a mother by choice and therefore loves her children. Nothing whatever is to be gained by driving the timorous and weak by lies or compulsion into pain which they will resent and responsibility which they will evade. Everything is to be gained by training a woman in knowledge, courage, and physical strength, and leaving it then to her own instinct and her mind to tell her that to create

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new human beings is worth the discomfort and the suffering which she must necessarily undergo. Those in whom the courage to create survives when choice is free and all the facts are known are those best fitted to bring children into the world, and breed in them eagerness and intrepidity. The others will only pass on fear and distaste for life from which individuals and the community suffer far too much already.<sup>1</sup>

I do not mean by this that we should, scorning the aid of science, return to natural childbirth, and let its pangs scare off the weaklings and the cowards. In this matter the charges of our critics are conflicting. They condemn us for having sought the aid of science to mitigate our suffering, and in the same breath tell us that a return to natural child-bed will bring back a primitive exhilaration and freedom from pain lost

<sup>1</sup> The anti-feminists who see in emancipated women nothing but persecuting spinsters should take comfort from the fact that voluntary motherhood will ultimately destroy feminism, if they are right. The children of women passionately desirous of maternity will inherit strong parental and survival instincts, the occasional feminist "sport" not reproducing herself!

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for thousands of years. I do not believe that for any comparatively civilized race, any race really worthy the name of man, childbirth has ever been painless. The upright position, held by eighteenth-century divines to be a source of pride in man, was the first injustice to women. Nor do I believe that the sufferings of modern women are any worse or their confinements any more difficult than those of women in the past. They are more closely observed and the difficulties known, and, where skill is available, the dangerous ones are less likely to be fatal. In the past the fragile woman died, or continued ailing, unobserved by a doctor and afraid to complain. People who live and breed in a state of nature are by no means so healthy and vigorous as our modern Rousseaus would have us believe: more children die than survive, and those who are left have physical defects and deformities which could have been remedied by knowledge and care. These and the ravages of smallpox and other diseases, and the deformities due to the natural accidents of life unmitigated by medical care, produce far more ugliness than the mark of an obstetric

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instrument on temple or forehead. Then, again, youth passes more quickly. The men and women we see in modern life, still reasonably young and fresh with rounded faces and teeth stopped or supplemented by art, would in a more primitive community be dead, or else crouching useless and despised, toothless and with sunken cheeks by the fireside of their sons and daughters.

Decay and pain belong to nature. To arrest the one and mitigate the other has been the task which the sciences that deal in physiology have set themselves. Remedial at first, they pass on to the stage of prevention. Already the principle of intelligent medicine is to strengthen what is weak in the body by nourishment and exercise rather than provide artificial substitutes. Paralysed limbs return to life ; women retain their teeth white and strong through several pregnancies. This is not done by a return to nature, but by an increase in civilization and knowledge. In that way our very landscapes have been formed. We prune, we nourish the soil, we cross-breed our plants. The vegetables upon which the enthusiast

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for nature urges us to live are the product of science and artifice : thousands of years of cultivation, nitrates from Chile, skill of the experimenter, skill of the gardener's hand. The same is true of the animals we breed for meat, eggs, or milk supply. Agriculture and stock-breeding seem natural to us—they were not natural in the distant past. As regards the human body, to me at least it seems that we are now beginning to approach the right attitude. There was more dosing and doctoring of petty ailments among intelligent people in the last century. To-day we try to learn how best to live in order that such ailments may not occur, and substitute a well-balanced diet for aids to digestion and the normal functioning of our bodies. We do the same in rearing our children. And this attitude would become more general if those who rule us, Press, Church, rich men and politicians, would consider it really important that every man, woman, and child in the State should have health and happiness, and therefore supply broadcast the necessary rules of life and sufficient of healthy and staple foods for all, in place of advertisement of

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quack remedies and patent substitutes prepared by profiteers.

To return to the application of science and nature to maternity. A special sentimentality and superstition inherited from the completely savage periods of history cling about this, as about sex. The avoidance of suffering in childbirth is taboo in the Japanese moral code, as it was until recently in Christian morals. Religion has persisted in regarding the female body as unclean when engaged in its most important functions, and purifying it afterwards by special prayers to the Deity.<sup>1</sup> We find this savagery current in Judaism<sup>2</sup> as in Christianity, together with an exhortation to be fruitful and multiply, and therefore to pass through shame and uncleanness as often as we can. It was thought a horror and an outrage when chloroform was used to help us. It is a still greater horror when means are discovered of not having children at all. To this day most doctors and dentists refuse to give an anæsthetic and draw a rotten tooth which is wearing

<sup>1</sup> See the service for the *Churching of Women* in the Prayer Book.

<sup>2</sup> *Leviticus*, xii, 1-8.

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down a pregnant mother's strength by sleepless nights and days of agony. Yet this can be done with reasonable care and skill. Behind all this there is the mystic belief that somehow or other nature does the work best unaided and unhindered ; and this mysticism is rooted in a savage taboo. Life is, indeed, so pertinacious that somehow some of us will survive whatever we do, but this does not seem to me an adequate attitude for the rational mother.

The truth is that it is not desired or expected that mothers should be rational. Maternal instinct is so wonderful, maternal devotion so sublime, cry our sentimental brutes. Whatever we may have known of life and the outside world, it is still expected in modern times that, once married, we shall descend into a morass of instinct and ignorance from which we shall never, if the male and the vindictively-minded spinster can prevent it, emerge again. We are privileged, so we are told, in that we may bear each year a child for the State, rock the cradle, wash, mend, and make, pass on the lore of housekeeping and infant-care to our daughters just as we received it from our

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mothers. It is such a beautiful picture : a pity it is entirely false. The old-fashioned mother had no lore, and her instinct was inadequate. She succeeded by luck rather than by knowledge. She adored, or disciplined ; she killed by kindness or by severity and neglect. She would coddle when she should have hardened, harden when she should have coddled ; she would over-feed and under-feed, or give the wrong kind of food. Since it has been the fashion for women to have minds, the books for mothers have become more scientific and our intelligent inquiries have been met by research and more adequate replies. Every mother with any intelligence who has reared one or more children through the first year of life and up to five years of age would admit nowadays that scientific knowledge was of more service to her than all the instinct and adoration at her command. Indeed, I believe the so-called maternal instinct in handling and understanding babies consists of habit almost imperceptibly learnt in tending the first, blossoming into a smooth instinctive unity with the coming of the second. The fashionable mother, said to be devoid

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of maternal instinct because she neglects her child, has simply not learnt it, because necessity does not compel her to practical duties. This is even true, though less so, of well-to-do mothers who feed their babies at the breast.

People will persist in imagining that uncivilized women were always able to feed their children in natural fashion. Very often they were obliged to seek the help of another mother, and, when that was not forthcoming, the baby died. It is quite true that our adaptation to modern conditions of life, nerve-stress, combined with overwork for women in towns and industrial districts, has caused breast-feeding to be less common than it was in the past. But here again the way of life is not back to nature, which is impossible because we cannot at a blow destroy industrialism and the towns—but onwards, to greater knowledge. Instead of bullying the mothers and telling them it is wicked not to feed their babies at the breast, let them know how, by pre-natal care of health and strength, by diet, by deliberate nerve-control, they can feed their babies with comfort and delight and without detriment to

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their health and the work which they must necessarily do—or even to their beauty. Here again, if choice is free and the child therefore ardently desired, there is more chance of success with breast-feeding. And knowledge of the chemical constituents of cow's milk and patent foods as compared with human milk is more likely to induce the modern mother to suckle her child than volumes of abuse or sentimental twaddle.

Then as to the hygiene of pregnancy. Could our mothers have taught us about the different food-values, about protein, nitrogenous foods, calcium from the green foods for teeth and bones, avoidance of too many albuminous foods? Knowledge of what diet can do to help us in pregnancy and our children in early youth is in its infancy, but it is there, none the less. Shall we fling it aside and return to pure instinct? What massage and remedial exercises have taught can be applied to our bodies during pregnancy and after childbirth. It is probable that closer study of the functions of the muscles of the back and the abdomen would enable us to teach women to exer-

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cise and control them in a way that would make childbirth almost painless, and the recovery of poise and activity afterwards more rapid and more thorough. Under present conditions, muscles that are often too rigid or too feeble expand and never recover their tone; others—the back muscles, it may be—go out of use temporarily and similarly do not recover. In the middle-class woman laziness is often the cause of difficult confinements and poor recovery of the figure; in the working mother a too speedy return to work which is too hard and does not exercise the body harmoniously; in both the ignorance which leads to wrong kinds of nourishment during pregnancy, and fear of doing harm to the child which leads to rigid and over-careful movement, are responsible for a good many troubles. Psychological effects may be serious. Most women develop during pregnancy sensitiveness and a timidity protective to the child. From this the very fertile mother has no opportunity to recover. Hence many of the silly old ladies who cannot cross roads unaided by a policeman. With birth-control, in two years a determined mother can completely restore

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her nerve, her joy in life, and her full muscular powers.

The author of *Lysistrata* suggests that by diet we may produce thin babies and therefore have easier confinements. This may be true, but it is a curious fact that the experience of some mothers and doctors goes to show that much protein (which Mr Ludovici suggests we should avoid) produces a thin baby and a corpulent mother; that, on the other hand, light and nitrogenous foods, while keeping the mother slim and supple, yield a plump 8 to 9 lbs. baby. I think the size of our babies is perhaps not so much under our control as many might wish to suggest. Heredity enters in. Children sometimes have large fathers. The sheep-breeder knows that he dare not mate certain larger types of rams with small-made ewes.

In all these problems, however, it is the frankness and intelligence which feminism has made possible for women which will bring solution and progress, rather than a return to the unguided instincts of our forefathers. The lore of motherhood is a science which is now beginning, but it is not

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following the lines which convention and the moralists expect. It defies sentiment, ridicules unnecessary and unintelligent sacrifice, is not content to suffer, but makes demands. It begins with birth-control, which to many seems the negation of motherhood, but which to the creative mother is the keystone of her work.

Suppose we have educated our young women sanely about physical matters, as suggested earlier in this chapter. As they reach the age of maturity and activity, what will they find? If they are middle- or upper-class, an existence that is not too intolerable. Feminism has won for them the right of entry to most professions and, provided they are fairly able, they can get work. None the less, it must be admitted that the years since the War have borne hardly upon wage-earning women of all classes. The lack of sexual freedom is a terrible burden, but the remedy ultimately lies in their own hands. Life in marriage still offers reasonable comfort and good food for man and wife and two or three children. But late marriages, from the lack of opportunity for men and the expense of living, cause girls' young bodies to be

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worn with longing unless they are bold enough to follow our modern Aspasias. This waiting to marry is a real danger to young women's health which conventional, unimaginative people refuse to face. It produces nervous disorders bordering at times on insanity.

As regards the care of her body in pregnancy and childbirth, and the feeding of her children, the middle-class mother is in a position to carry out what modern science has to teach. She cannot have a large family, it is true, and the cry goes up on all sides that it is very hard for the middle-classes to pay for the proper education of their children.<sup>1</sup> The best stocks are being penalized and extinguished, so we are told. This is part of a much bigger problem, and a problem that

<sup>1</sup> An instance of the incredible snobbery surrounding this question is given by the decision of the conference of Headmasters of Secondary Schools, January, 1925, against free secondary education. While the middle-class parent groans against the cost of his children's education, he also refuses to take the obvious remedy of making education free, for fear the working class should get some of it. Class difficulties would not exist if health and education were adequately dealt with.

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involves the class-war. All ambitious mothers, from miners' wives to the aristocracy, would like to breed the fine types who receive a thorough education and then enter one of the intellectual professions. Obviously this cannot be. And, given equal ability in two children of different classes of life, there is no just reason for driving the worker's child, who has less good food and conditions and is therefore less fitted to stand the strain, through the worry of the scholarship system, whilst the other child's path is made smooth to a ruling position. Man for man, woman for woman, the workers would be the equals of the middle-class in strength and ability, given the same nourishment, comfort and training. In actual fact, the middle-class is perpetually being replenished in one generation, or two at most, from below. Middle-class fathers and mothers have no right to claim the privilege of a large family unless their children, if they are strong but not clever, are prepared to work the railways or dig coal in the mines. Professional people, scientists, artists, research workers, pure mathematicians, as well as skilled engineers, are, indeed, the

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salt of the earth, and the community that fails to produce them and give them scope is doomed in this modern world. But they are supported by manual labour, and it cannot be denied that their number cannot be indefinitely extended except by an increase of productivity and wealth. A more equal system of society will diminish drudgery and make it possible for all to have a fine development of intelligence and understanding, whatever the work on which they are employed.

Feminism in the mother has led us far from maternity. That is what it is bound to do. The working mother to-day looks straight from her kitchen, if she is lucky enough to have one, on to one of the most complex situations in history. And the intelligent ones are not blind to the situation. That is why I suggested that, though middle-class feminism has conquered the professions, the feminism of working mothers might bring a new and powerful contribution to our work.

The life of the working woman who intends maternity is becoming well-nigh impossible, and she knows it. When

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she has found a husband the community denies them a decent house. Possibly they find one room or two at an exorbitant rent, with no water and a grate unsuited for cooking. There are no restaurants at which the pair can afford to feed. Therefore they exist on partially or casually-cooked food, in-nutritious bread, and food from tins. Things may not be so bad if the wife can go on with work at a mill and get food that is fairly good at the canteen, her wages helping the meals taken at home.

The coming of a baby too often means a search for another lodging. The Bishops and the Generals like babies, but land-ladies don't. Another room is found, perhaps. The mother works till the last moment, has a difficult confinement and inadequate attention, and gets up too soon. It is not easier for her than for a delicately-nurtured woman, and it is not less painful. Probably it is worse, because the working mother has from birth been underfed and has weaknesses and deformities—a contracted pelvis, perhaps—that a woman well-fed and cared for escapes. Then it goes on, baby after

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baby up to ten and eleven,<sup>1</sup> always in one room and no more money coming in. The mother works whenever she can to help keep the family. Frequently she is cursed or beaten by her husband for her fertility. Should the husband die, she must work continually and harder or send her children to the workhouse. In the opinion of the Bishops, she deserves the "stigma of the Poor Law," and, in the opinion of all right-thinking people, anything done for her by individuals or the State is in the nature of a charity.

If I but had the eloquence of Hecuba mourning her slaughtered sons! The crime of war is bad enough : this butchery of hope and promise and human lives is one so black that the heart and mind of every woman who has borne a child should revolt against it until it is tolerated no more. It is easy to escape into an aristocratic theory of society. It has been done before, and ends in the guillotine. These working mothers are the people who must be lied to and terrified

<sup>1</sup> A woman of 45 years of age gave birth recently at Queen Charlotte's Hospital, Paddington, to her 23rd child. Ten children is not uncommon.

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by bogies for fear that they use their votes to help themselves. And it is they who, when they sit in conference, demand of the State the right to stem the tide of children, to endow mothers, to pension widows, to teach and tend maternity and ensure rest for pregnant and nursing women ; to see that houses and schools are built, and to control and purify the food-supply. Here is the most serious problem for the mothers, and one which the middle-class politician does not touch, because for the middle-class pure and fresh food is almost always obtainable. It is for the working mother to tackle those tins. She cannot now destroy industrialism, which dragged her work and her after it to the mill ; but she can claim her right to control it in the name of life and the destiny of her children. Control of the population is essential to solving the food-problem and improving national health. Women in small houses know it. They know, moreover, that contraceptives are better than infanticide and war. The survival of the fittest is a false doctrine in child-bearing as in fighting. Every child which starts with a reasonably good constitution can, by the right

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care up to one year and food up to five, grow up to be strong and well. And, if the weak and unhealthy are discouraged from breeding and healthy mothers given proper care, great improvements are possible. Poor food and over-crowding are the ladder down which we go to mental deficiency and ultimate complete feebleness of mind.<sup>1</sup> If we cared for life, the best food would by law go to the pregnant

<sup>1</sup> Professor MacBride, dealing recently with the "Inheritance of Defect" (*Daily Telegraph*, January 8th, 1925) said : "The question of questions was whether the failure of the lowest strata of society was due to their surroundings or to their inborn characters. Such questions must be ultimately decided by experiment; and proper experimental work could only be done with animals; we were not entitled to make *corpora vilia* of our fellow human beings. For this reason he would direct attention to the common goldfish, whose weird monstrosities were all originally due to the starvation of the eggs with respect to light and air in the earliest stages of development. The result of this starvation was to weaken the developmental power and to produce a disharmonious arrest of growth of various organs. Similar arrests of growth occurred in human beings, and were the causes of mental and bodily defects. Their original cause, however, must be sought in the starvation and poisoning of the blood of the mother, but, once started, they were hereditary."

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and nursing mothers instead of, as at present, to clubs for fat old gentlemen and the frequenters of palatial hotels. It is probable that at present we do not produce enough milk, or produce and import enough butter and eggs to distribute adequately to all.<sup>1</sup> But, by stabilizing or decreasing our population, and by co-operation, intensive culture and control of marketing abroad and of marketing and purity at home, we could see to it that everybody had enough and that what they had was really good.

To feed an industrial population in a small island is a peculiar and special problem and one demanding expert care and advice. Food must come long distances and must "keep." Hence the preservatives and tins and the need to be watchful beyond measure against poisoning and the loss of what is vital to our well-being. With research, the problem would be easy; but we must make it clear that it is important. Science would easily enable us to produce more from the soil, and, as regards the food of mothers,

<sup>1</sup> Working people live on tinned milk, margarine, and substitute eggs—all deficient in necessary vitamins.

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since the assimilation of extra minerals, salts, etc., in their natural state is not always satisfactory or easy during pregnancy, we might find ways of growing food, through treatment of the soil, to provide for the special needs of their condition.

What then must feminist mothers demand? The right first of all to the recognition of their work—the most dangerous of all trades and the most neglected and despised. They should ask for endowment from the community. This is opposed by many on the ground that fathers delight to support their children, and it is they who should claim from the community an adequate family-wage. But, after all, it is the mother who bears and tends the child, and, although many women receive the whole of their husbands' wages, others must fight a humiliating battle against drink and tobacco for the wherewithal to build their children's bodies. This struggle is exemplified on a large scale in the spending of State revenue, most of which goes on armaments and the forces of destruction, and an infinitesimal portion to aid and support life. If Jason cannot

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give up his murderous playthings, let him have neither sons to destroy nor daughters to drag through misery. His children shall never be conceived. I have indicated that this is happening already, not as a deliberate revolt, but as a counsel of despair in a world which offers no hope, no joy, and no opportunity to the young.

The mother has a right to demand two years' rest between pregnancies ; and the right to decide the number of her children. For some the call of motherhood is insistent and its charm grows with experience ; they would be good mothers and might well have large families. They could help others by superintending nursery-schools in which children from one to five years might have their important meal of the day. But it is imperative that the woman who has children should not be shut out from public life. The ideal would be for a woman to continue her education at least till eighteen, have the first child at twenty-four, then perhaps three others at two-year intervals. This assumes that large numbers of women do not choose to breed. At thirty-five every mother of four children would, in a community of good schools, convenient

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houses, and well-run restaurants, be free again to take part in public life. It does not follow that she would be separated from her children : they would go to day-schools. But the mother would do the work for which she was best fitted in school,<sup>1</sup> kitchen, hospital, shop, mill, or Parliament. In this way her opinion would count, and her attitude to life help to permeate the community, which is otherwise left to be guided by the outlook of the single woman and the male. Problems of unemployment and competition due to married women's work are really questions of population pressure, muddled thinking, and bad organization. To discuss all this in close detail is hardly within the scope of this book.

In conclusion, it may be said that the community should never, except on the strongest grounds, deny parenthood to man or woman. Therefore marriages which after two years did not result in a

<sup>1</sup> I am strongly of opinion that experience of maternity, even more than of marriage alone, would help the teacher. Some women, even teachers, are bored by children until they have one of their own, whereupon all children of all ages become interesting.

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child should be dissoluble at the wish of either party to the contract. This, apart from all other reasons for which the cancelling of marriage should be allowed. Partnership in marriage should in effect be regarded as a partnership for parenthood, and as such should not be entered upon lightly.

## V

## JASON AND ADMETUS

*Men*

BEFORE we pass on to an attempt at a summary and conclusion of the argument, it may be as well to re-state briefly what is the matter with men. Certainly they are not such fierce tyrants as when first we fought them ; certainly they have some grounds to complain of the feminine arrogance which, not content with proving equality, wants to go on and prove women the superior sex. We might, on grounds of science perhaps, advance this claim, urging that, since a female being needs one more chromosome for its creation than a male, it must, therefore, be of higher importance. Should we do so, and seek to live alone on the planet, producing our children by parthenogenesis, our pride would be doomed to a

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fall. Such children, there is reason to believe, would all be males. At least, that is what happens when the experiment is tried by sea-urchins. Men, on the other hand, like to pretend that our assumption of intelligence and independence is but a momentary spurt in a race which must end in masculine victory and feminine submission. They admit that the great development of our freedom in body and mind has given us a serious advantage, and the more discerning among them urge their fellows to press on and catch us up. Others trundle the golden apples beseechingly, but still Atalanta runs.

I believe it to be true that the education and outlook of men is more old-fashioned than that of women reared in the freedom of feminist traditions. Men have not yet realized how women's outlook is changing, nor attempted very seriously to adapt themselves to the change. They will do so, of a certainty ; for, true as it may be that above all desires in woman is that to be pleasing to men, it is still truer that the desire of desires in man is to be pleasing to women. I believe that Puritanism or asceticism, of which they

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accuse us, is very strong in them. One of the compliments or insults that has been hurled during the sex-war is that the feminine mind is pervaded by the physical harmony of the feminine body. One may perhaps retort that the dualism of mind and matter is a very masculine philosophy ; and one which, moreover, men have translated into their everyday lives by the sharp division they like to make between fighters and thinkers, games-playing idiots and thin intellectuals. Too often a woman of vitality and intelligence must choose between a soldier-gentleman and Chaucer's clerk.<sup>1</sup> Should she choose the former, she takes a plunge into the past. This man exults in murder, whether of animals or of his fellow-creatures ; deep down within him he is still convinced that women are divided into good and bad—and both require the handling of a master. His wife must

<sup>1</sup> A clerk ther was of Oxenford also  
That unto logyk hadde longe y-go.  
As leene was his hors as is a rake,  
And he nas nat rige fat, I undertake,  
  
And him was lever have at his beddes heed  
Twenty bokes clad in black or reed.

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beware how she responds to his advances : she may be thought forward or impure. Decency must above all things be preserved. Though games and the classics may have taught the English gentleman the beauty of paganism and the joy of the naked body where man is concerned, he is still stuffy in his approach to sex. He rarely brings the freshness of the morning and the joy of the open skies to the love of mistress or of wife. Plush, gilt and silk stockings express the one ; pipe, the armchair at the fireside, dinner, and a coldly furnished bedroom, the other. Conversation is a masculine monologue, punctuated by assent. He will be good to his children, provided they are not odd, and will protect his wife. He will never lift her to rapture. She fears, and will probably deceive him.

The intellectual—perhaps by reason of the monastic tradition of learning, perhaps because he finds Jason so revolting—does all that he can to forget the needs of the body. Woman counts as one of them. She is a burden, a responsibility, a distraction, an incursion of the material into a world of contemplation. As for children and domestic life, they would

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make an end to all thought, to all art. An instinctive life—so he thinks—is possible only in spasms, if at all, for a man with serious mental work to accomplish. If woman persists in keeping him company, then she must shoulder the burdens, tend him and care for him, and leave him alone when he doesn't want her. It is this contempt for the natural play of instinct which eats the heart out of life for many intellectuals, men and women, of to-day. They dread the gift of themselves, the loss of independence which passion would bring, and therefore they never give freely. In part, they are cherishing the medieval tradition that to be worthy of spiritual or mental labour man and woman must go aside and renounce; in part, they are inspired by a tight conception of materialism, in which individuals are hurled like lumps of matter by dynamic forces through space, unable to do more than come near, but never mingle one with another. This view of life and the medieval are combining to destroy our world in lovelessness and despair.

The old-fashioned mind clings to spiritual duties and consolations and the

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framework of Church discipline as a bulwark against personal licence ; the more modern mind is dominated by mechanism—which is, after all, no more than the rational control of matter—and seeks in an intelligent organization of the State, a framework within which each individual is to perform the duties for which he is best fitted. To neither conception is love between individuals, or sex-love between man and woman, important. In effect, personal relationships do not matter. The Christian doctrine of all-embracing love was once potent, but fails to-day because of the foundation of God, dogma, and Church on which it is built and which modern people cannot accept. “To love thy neighbour as thyself” is also inadequate without knowledge and understanding. But the rational materialists’ attitude—such, for instance, is that of the Bolsheviks—to human relationships, in particular to women and sex, is as lacking in the sense of human dignity as the Christian. Monogamy and undiscriminating licence rest upon a common basis of contempt for love and personality, both asserting that the desire of a man is

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for a woman, of a woman for a man, but no matter whom. Dualism, as ever, is the culprit. Sex-love is to be no more than a physical need—no part of the serious business of life. Science has brought a more modern attitude to matter, which by its effect upon the imagination may change our conception of personality and sex. Force, struggle, solidity, contact, may yield to gentleness, non-resistance, intermingling and uniting—not by an ethical change, but by a change in scientific thought. We shall no longer think of mind and matter as wronging or thwarting one another, because they are not different forces; and we shall no longer be able to separate physical from mental virtue or depravity. We shall no longer value a love that suppresses or disregards the union of personality.

Taboos and superstitions, struggling dynamic individuals or States—how may we set up a new vision? Perhaps what I have written above seems far-fetched to the reader, but I do not think our life can be cut up into compartments. Philosophy and sex are more important in politics than General Elections. The

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revolt against the all-powerful Christian State began in the assertion of certain people that their love of good fruit and wine or their enjoyment of sex were not worthy of hell-fire. On personal conduct, on our standards of personal relationship, man to woman, parents to children, are built the customs and laws of States and ultimately their national and international policy. It is here, then, with man and woman, that we must begin. I have in mind, as I write, a piece of Chinese porcelain, on which the sage or poet sits with his book and long pipe; a lovely and elegant lady peeps over his shoulder, and close at hand plays an impish child. I do not think that the Chinese who conceived it expected that poet to write bad verses, or, if a sage, to compose worthless philosophy. On the contrary, to love with devotion, to be learned, to have children, are ideas which have shaped the harmony of Chinese life. As compared with their generous acceptance of instinct our Christian dread of sex and horror of the body are obscene.

If we are to make peace between man and woman, and by their unity and partnership change the ideas that govern our

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politics and our outlook on the world, it is essential that men should make a more determined attempt to understand what feminists are seeking. It is useless to go on abusing, or pretending that this is a matter of minor importance. It is essential also that women should think clearly and continue in courage and honesty of word and action, neither abandoning all for the pursuit of pleasure nor glorying in opportunities for an oppressive morality belonging to past ages. First and foremost, man or woman, we are human beings. There is a great deal of the work in the community which we can each do with equal ability, given equal training and opportunity. There are other tasks which we must agree to delegate to one another, and neither despise the other for performing them. Life and harmony, generosity and peace are the ideals which the best thought of feminism has set before us. We believe that States and individuals can put them into practice. Will man not pause to understand before he continues on the path of destruction and strife, cupidity and war? Can we not persuade Jason from barbarity and Admetus to the

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abandonment of his fears ? To live with vigour, body and mind and imagination, without fear or shame or dread of death ; to drive these baser passions from the hold they have upon our morality and our politics—this is what we ask of modern men and women. They can come to it only in a reckless love of one another, a passion that gives again and again without fear of hurt or exhaustion. It is not an abandonment to nature and to instinct that we need. Pure and barbaric instinct is no more. Our bodies are too much impregnated by inherited habit and knowledge, too much surrounded in their growth by the findings of science. Men and women are not creatures of clay, nor disembodied spirits ; but things of fire intertwining in understanding, torrents leaping to join in a cascade of mutual ecstasy. There is nothing in life to compare with this uniting of minds and bodies in men and women who have laid aside hostility and fear and seek in love the fullest understanding of themselves and of the universe. You cannot measure it in inches, nor turn it on and off like a tap. You cannot stay it now and indulge it another time. You cannot come to it

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by religion or by unaided reason, or by the brute courage of sheer physical vitality. Jealousy is death. Dualism is nonsense, compartments unavailing. You must have in you the thought that is creation ; life's spring, and the daring of its unconquered waters—so may you transform the world and people it with gods who know no more the hates and littleness of men.



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